



The Criterion

NEWSLETTER of the NORTHEAST CHAPTER of the PROFESSIONAL CAR SOCIETY
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MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Hopefully, everyone had an enjoyable summer full of great old car events. Since the last issue of The Criterion came out, we have had our car show in Lahaska, the International Meet in Burbank, and the summer picnic at the Vickery's.

I would like to thank Paul and Donna for hosting the picnic again this year at their home. Those who attended had an enjoyable afternoon, and the Liberty Corner First Aid Squad was nice enough to bring their 1972 Superior Hi-Top Ambulance which is still in service. Bad weather, unfortunately, meant that there was not a big turnout for the Lahaska show, but several members did show up with their cars.

The 2007 International Meet in Burbank was attended by nine members of the Northeast Chapter. Lou Farah and the other members of the PCS Southern California Chapter made sure there was plenty to do and that everyone was treated like family.

We are now in the home stretch for the 2008 International Meet, which will take place in Mount Laurel, NJ August 5th-8th. The committee has already sent the registration form to The Professional Car for publication in the next issue; it is also posted on the National Web Site at www.professionalcar.org. There is a lot work to still be done between now and next August, so I am asking for the help of the membership to make this meet a success. Everyone is welcome to attend the planning committee meetings we'll be holding every month to finalize the details. If you would like to help in any way, please let me know and I'll make sure you know when and where the meetings are being held.

One minor change we've made to the 2008 International Meet schedule is that the Duck Boat Tour of Philadelphia, due to a cost increase, is being replaced by a Trolley Bus Tour that will be making 29 different stops around the City. Unlike the Duck Boat, you will be able to get on and off as many times as you want during the day.

Unless you notify me by December 1st that you would still like to receive a traditional paper newsletter, this will be the last issue of The Criterion that will be automatically mailed out to all Chapter members. From here on, this publication will normally be e-mailed to our members and friends as a PDF file attachment. - Dan McCann

George Hamlin came to the PCS Lahaska 2007 with this Henney-built 1954 Packard limousine, which touted a trunk-mounted air conditioner and a formal roof treatment by Derham of Rosemont, PA. The flag under the right headlight is from the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.



PICNIC AT THE VICKERY'S

On Saturday, August 11th, 2007, Paul & Donna Vickery's evocative, Revolutionary War era homestead in Millington, NJ hosted the PCS Northeast Chapter's summer picnic for the fourth successful year in a row. Having lost a rabbit and two turtles since our last visit, the in-house zoo had gotten slightly smaller but still constituted one dog, four cats, five chickens, a bearded dragon lizard named Garfield and three Guinea Hens whose piercing screeches recalled the peacocks used to guard the Sultan's harem in the days of the Ottoman Empire.

Every deer in the vicinity, it also seemed, ventured from the surrounding woods to graze among the pro-cars brought by PCS members. Fresh from two trips to Connecticut where it was used for period filming in the Leonardo DiCaprio/Kate Winslet reunion movie Revolutionary Road, Bill Marcy's red-and-white 1956 Meteor ambulance invited immediate comparison to the Paul Vickery's all-white 1956 Miller, especially since both Cadillacs were completed in the last model year before these two Western Ohio coachbuilders formally joined forces as Miller-Meteor. Fred Miller and Elaine French showed off the Liberty Corner First Aid Squad's blue-and-white 1972 Superior Cadillac 54 ambulance, which originally accommodated four stretchers and appeared in fine fettle after a five-mile trip from HQ that took the odometer to 60,004 miles. While everyone else focused on the ambulance-filled photo albums spread across the hood, Richard Litton's red-and-white 1965 Superior Pontiac high-top got Your Editor thinking about the donor vehicle for the red



Previously-unseen ambulances at Paul & Donna Vickery's August 11th picnic included the Liberty Corner First Aid Squad's 1972 Superior "54" and Bill Marcy's 1956 Meteor Cadillac.

oval lenses on each side of the fiberglass roof cap. Bearing the code "ERST60B" on each end, it turns out these were sourced from the 1960 Edsel parts bin of all places, while the "GUIDE 10" taillights were Chevy Corvair components.

Among the unmodified cars at Millington, the 1970s dominated thanks to Fred & Tracy Goerlitz's 1976 Olds Delta 88, Your Editor's Pale Jade 1978 Ford LTD, and the 1976 Buick Riviera that Joe Buono has driven more than 141,000 miles since he bought it new. Aside from being the picnic's distance champion, Albany area denizen Dan Herrick staged the PCS debut of a front-wheel drive 1984 Chrysler LeBaron Executive Limousine he found in Maine through eBay. "Basically, I got it two weeks ago and picked it up yesterday from Connecticut," he reported of the deep blue 60,000-mile beauty, which had originally been operated by a funeral director before its second owner used it as a daily driver. "(PCS Website Operations Manager) Paul Steinberg drove me to Maine to get this from the middle of nowhere, after which I drove it back to his house and picked it up when I could get a ride."

Aside from such unusual interior appointments as an electric sliding partition, a buttoned velour headliner and separately-tuned AM/FM radios for the front and rear compartments, this car was extremely rare bird, being one of only 1,687 converted by American Sunroof Corporation (after prototyping two cars in 1983) near Chrysler's St. Louis assembly plant from 1984 to 1986. Of this total, 1,491 units were partition-equipped, 131-inch wheelbase seven-seat Limousines like Herrick's car, while just 196 were first-year-only, five-passenger Executive Sedans distinguished by a slimmer B-pillar and a slightly-shorter, 124-inch wheelbase. "When they first came out and I saw the folder, I said to myself this is a neat car and I'd like to have one," Herrick added. "Nixon had one in retirement - his Presidential seal went where I put my magnetic PCS logo."



Bill Marcy (left) learns about Dan Herrick's newly-acquired 1984 Chrysler LeBaron Executive limousine.

LAHASKA SATISFIES IN SPITE OF IFFY WEATHER

With torrential rain promised in the forecast, the PCS Northeast Chapter's Sixth Annual Charity Car Show attracted less than twenty vehicles to Peddler's Village in Lahaska, PA on June 3rd, 2007, but the report submitted to Your Editor by Jeff & Mary Hookway confirmed the caliber of entrants was still something to be proud of. With the show field open to all years, makes and types of vehicles in addition to professional cars, Bill Marotta's lovely yellow 1972 Ford LTD from Totowa, NJ was a shoo-in for top honors in the 1965-and-newer convertible class, while the highest-scoring muscle car was a 1967 Pontiac GTO hardtop owned by Ralph Iradi of Fairfield, NJ. Ray Koziol, from Martinsville, NJ, earned best four-door with a two-tone green Bentley S3 he had first admired, and been photographed with, as a 14-year-old at the 1964 New York International Automobile Show. In addition to being one of only 77 left-hookers built for U.S. consumption, it had been fitted with a number of unusual accessories by Harold Radford coachworks of London including a door-mounted beverage cabinet, a separate front passenger seat headrest and a built-in cigar cutter.

In addition to earning Best-In-Show, the 1966 Chevy Impala SS fastback brought from Fairfield, NJ by Nick Agresta was deemed the top two-door completed after 1964. A convertible-contoured metal roof earned equivalent kudos among 1964-and-earlier two-doors for Bedminster, PA resident Ralph Reichenbach's 1963 Buick LeSabre, while Best Truck went to Bob Massaro's 1965 Ford F-100



In addition to earning Best-In-Show, Nick Agresta's 1966 Chevy Impala SS from Fairfield, NJ was awarded Best 1965-up Two-Door.

Styleside pickup from Chalfont, PA. Philadelphia PCS and C-LC member Andy Toton's 1958 Cadillac Fleetwood Sixty Special four-door hardtop, whose comprehensively-documented history was summarized in the Autumn, 2006 issue of The Criterion, received Chairman's Choice from PCS Northeast Chapter President Dan McCann. Bill Smoot, another hobbyist from Chalfont, PA, received the Best Original Un-restored award for a 1955 Dodge Coronet Club Coupe attractively two-toned in Heather Rose and Sapphire White; it turned out that this ultra low mileage, lavishly-optioned car was originally shipped new to Hooper Plymouth-Dodge-Chrysler in Plainview, Texas, where the showroom owner placed it into storage for some thirty years instead of selling it.

Though no coachbuilder was recorded in the Hookways' correspondence, a 1996 Fleetwood raised-roof "double cut" limousine (*photo below*) brought from Watchung, NJ by Raritan River Region Cadillac-LaSalle Club member Joe Puleo proved an irresistible choice for the Best Professional Car. Jeff Beyer of New Tripoli, PA, whose 1955 Studebaker Ambulet has practically become an institution at PCS International Meets, showed us something delectably different (but still South Bend-built) in the form of a 1951 Champion taxi that deservedly won top honors in the special interest category. George Hamlin, meanwhile, came up from Maryland with a 1954 Packard limousine that was one of only 35 constructed by Henney (plus another 65 externally identical eight-passenger sedans) during the model's final year. Aside from a heavily-padded roof with blind quarter panels and an oval rear window that was added by Derham of Rosemont, PA, scoops on the rear fenders indicated that this extremely rare and supremely-dignified conveyance had a Frigidaire air conditioner with a trunk-mounted evaporator. Being a hot gas bypass system lacking the expansion valve employed on later systems, the compressor runs continuously unless the drive belts are removed for the winter.



CALIFORNIA THERE WE WENT!

Hosting the Professional Car Society's 2007 International Meet in Burbank, California from July 10th-14th, So-Cal Chapter President Louis Farah and his V.P. Kevin O'Connell could not have set the bar higher when it comes to the encore that our Northeast Chapter will be staging next August 5th-9th in Mount Laurel, N.J. As the current, Third Quarter issue of The Professional Car offers plenty of detail on the vehicles displayed at Johnny Carson Park on Saturday - Steve Lichtman also contributed a fine report on Friday's pilgrimage to sites connected with the NBC series Emergency! and the Bill Cosby/Raquel Welch ambulance comedy Mother, Jugs and Speed - Your Editor has opted to focus on the dozen-plus tours that respectively explored the region's automotive, firefighting and funeral cultures on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Though the non-stop rush hours (let alone the multiple plane changes required to reach LAX or Bob Hope Burbank airports from the East Coast) made this meet among the most exhausting in the 31-year history of the PCS, it was obvious by week's end that Lou and Kevin truly love L.A. and did a fine job finding inventive ways for us to connect with and appreciate their sprawling, 458-square-mile metropolis.

Tuesday, July 10th, 2007: "Automotive Day"

Having done a lot of film work in his capacity as a standby firefighter, PCS So-Cal V.P. Kevin O'Connell is an ideal tour guide to Los Angeles' omnipresent entertainment industry and its unique relations with car enthusiasts and emergency professionals. In addition to driving the fire truck in

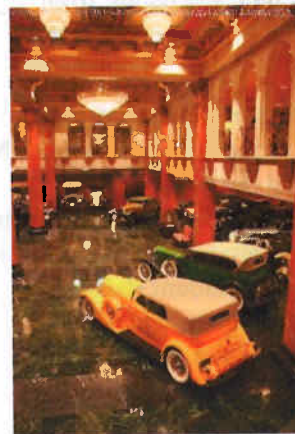


The Nethercutt Collection's latest restoration was this front-wheel drive 1930 Ruxton sporting a Joseph Urban-designed color scheme with horizontal pink and purple stripes

the Seinfeld episode where Kramer (Michael Richards) tries to steer the tail end of a hook-and-ladder with humorously-disastrous consequences, he also cut a fat-suited Eddie Murphy out of a Dodge Viper in The Nutty Professor (fortunately, the roof was just a

mock-up). In his capacity as the owner and President of B&M Siren, he can also think of "a million reasons" why his egg-shaped Super Chief is superior to the much-vaunted Federal Q; the top three are that "it's half the weight and has half the current draw, and we wind our own brake coils right in the shop. The Q's only advantage is that it can coast for five minutes."

While the freeway from Burbank to Sylmar is five lanes wide in places, the PCS bus bogs down quite often as it heads to the meet's first tour at the Nethercutt Museum. At least, this affords time to scrutinize a structure that looks something like the Great Wall of China snaking over some hills to the north (it turns out to be the Los Angeles Aqueduct from the Owens Valley) and giant roadside cutouts depicting historic Lockheed aircraft like the Constellation and the SR-71 reconnaissance jet, which mark a shopping center built on the company's old factory site in Burbank. Kevin adds, of course, that the B&M Super Chief was tuned in Lockheed's wind tunnel.



A balcony-level view of the Grand Salon at the Nethercutt Museum, dominated by a Packard and Duesenberg of 1934 vintage

The car collecting passion of J.B. "Jack" Nethercutt - his wife Dorothy was similarly enthused about antique dolls - was financed by his inheritance of Merle Norman Cosmetics, which his mother started in her L.A. kitchen during the 1920s. Museum Archivist Laurie Thornhill, giving her welcome spiel in front of a 1913 Case Model 40 fire truck, jokes that we shouldn't "get any funny ideas" because the batteries in all the cars are charged and the keys are in the ignitions. Handling everything from oil changes to frame-off restorations, an in-house staff of fifteen full-time mechanics makes sure each auto is serviced and driven at least once a year. Beginning with a Merrimac-bodied 1930 duPont town car J.B. purchased on a whim from a corner gas station and spent nineteen months and \$65,000



Inside the Nethercutt's new museum building, Bill Wright and Fred Goerlitz admire an all-original 1911 Oldsmobile Limited limousine with 43-inch diameter wheels.

restoring, six Nethercutt vehicles have won Best-of-Show at the Pebble Beach Concours since 1958.

Situated beyond a full-sized replica of an 1886 Benz three-wheeler, the centerpiece of Nethercutt's original 1974 museum building is a second-level Grand Salon

evoking the lavish dealerships and hotel shows where classic cars were sold in the Roaring Twenties 1920s and early 30s. Its awe-inspiring appointments include Bohemian crystal chandeliers, three different kinds of marble from Italy, Vermont and Belgium, and huge portraits of J.B and Dorothy Nethercutt hanging above the player grand piano on the balcony. Having been replicated as a 1/24th scale Franklin Mint model, the most famous car on the floor is arguably the Rollston-bodied 1933 Duesenberg SJ Arlington Torpedo Sedan debuted at the Century of Progress Exhibition in Chicago; nicknamed "The Twenty Grand," it took two years for the car to find its first owner in the depths of the Depression!

The impressive musical instrument collection on the top floor of Nethercutt's 1974 building features a pair of massive, intricately-carved "Orchestrions" that were made in Leipzig, Germany during the 1920s as a substitute for live orchestras in cafes, beer halls and hotels. One of these calliope-like giants, built for a café in Brussels by the Hugo Popper Co., was ignominiously replaced by a jukebox even though it was equivalent to a 12-piece band! Even more incredibly, it turns out that the entire room was specially-built around a 5,000-pipe Wurlitzer organ completed for the Denver Auditorium in 1918. After this colossus, thirty percent larger than the organ at Radio City Music Hall, is hooked to a computer program playing "All I Ask Of You" from The Phantom of the Opera, PCS President Brady Smith notices that Jack Nethercutt, Jr., with his suit jacket slung casually over his shoulder, is one of the other people in the audience.

In 2000, the Nethercutt Collection expanded to a dramatic new glass-fronted building on the opposite side of Bledsoe Street, but there still isn't enough space to display every vehicle without periodic rotation. Just a few of the cars warranting attention on the day the PCS visited included an entirely-original 1911 Oldsmobile Limited limousine with 43-inch diameter wheels and a 706 cubic-inch T-head six-cylinder engine; a 1923 Voison C-5 Sporting Victoria that once belonged to silent movie idol Rudolph Valentino; and a 1937 Pierce-Arrow limousine towing a 1936 Travelodge trailer finished in matching deep blue paintwork.



Cinema Vehicle Services owner Ray Claridge brought out his personal 1959 Miller-Meteor Cadillac Sentinel for PCS members to admire.

The next stop on "Automotive Day" is Cinema Vehicle Services in North Hollywood, where company owner Ray Claridge parked his personal 1959 Miller-Meteor Cadillac Sentinel for PCS members to examine outside the main building. Though the 1959 M-Ms used in Ghostbusters I and II are also being restored on-site, long lines of Crown Victorias finished in L.A., Las Vegas, Boston, New York and Miami livery re-emphasize that cop car replicas remain the operation's bread-and-butter. One also couldn't help noticing that there were at least two examples of every civilian vehicle in inventory just-in-case, whether a film or TV production might need a tail-finned 1959 Rambler, an innocuous Geo Metro hatchback or identically-customized Chrysler 300s with 20-inch wheels and black-and-silver two-tone paint jobs. The assortment of vintage trucks runs the gamut from an early 1950s REO Gold Comet Civil Defense panel van to a mid-1960s Toyota pickup that was simply incapable of seating modern, plus-sized American motorists. Wistfully recalling that "the Milan wafers were my favorites," Kevin

O'Connell took a special shine to a cube-shaped 1931 Fageol Twin Coach that could be driven from the standing position as it delivered oven-fresh cookies, donuts and pastries for the Helms Bakery in Culver City.

As the bus proceeded down the "Miracle Mile" financial district to the Petersen Automotive Museum at the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Fairfax Avenue, Kevin recalled that an entire six-block stretch of Wilshire was recreated in three-quarter scale at an old McDonnell-Douglas hangar for the Tommy Lee Jones/Anne Heche disaster movie Volcano. "It was spooky to walk down," he said, "and was the largest propane burn permit ever issued in L.A. history" (the movie's tagline, "The Coast is Toast," may also be one of the cleverest ever coined). Outside Petersen's vestibule, funeral historians had incentive to admire an ultra-streamlined, aluminum-bodied 1938 REO COE tractor constructed for Dr. Hubert Eaton of the Forest Lawn Memorial Parks by the Standard Carriage Works of Los Angeles, which was linked to a Curtiss Aerocar fifth-wheel trailer built in Coral Gables, Florida. (See photo below).

The amenities of the Vagabond, as it was known, included sleeping accommodations for six people with separate quarters for the driver, a self-contained restroom and kitchen, and an observation deck equipped with a speedometer, compass and intercom. In 1953, after 250,000 miles of use, its original flat-



12 White truck engine was replaced by a 300-horsepower Cummins 6-cylinder diesel and the vehicle remained in regular use through 1991.

Beyond an oversize photo honoring recently-deceased Museum founder Robert E. Peterson - his largesse was made possible by his ownership of Motor Trend and other enthusiast magazines - elaborate period dioramas are an important element in the first floor displays. Some of the best include a Beaux-Arts showroom filled with 1932 Fords (based on the Germond Motor Co. dealership built at 6154 Hollywood Boulevard in 1919-20) and a full-sized, pipe-smoking replica of The Dog Cafe, which was constructed on West Washington Boulevard in 1928

and demolished in the mid-1970s. The second floor, meanwhile, offers a film and TV car exhibit with the 1946 Ford that George Barris transformed into "Greased Lightning"; the six-wheeled Hannibal 8 driven by Jack Lemmon and Peter Falk in The Great Race; the Chrysler Imperial-based Black Beauty from The Green Hornet; and a full-sized replica of the Speed Racer Mach 5 constructed for a Child Safety Network tour in 1999. Also on display is Steve McQueen's Jaguar XK-SS and an intriguing 1941 Cadillac coupe customized by Don Lee for Clark Gable and his wife Carole Lombard, which featured a lowered roofline, blanked-out quarter windows and shaved side trim.

Wednesday, July 11th, 2007: "Fire/EMS Day"

The bus trip to Leader Ambulances in El Monte begins with the eastbound Ventura and Foothill Freeways across the Arroyo Seco canyon in Pasadena, where the right side windows offer a look at the gracefully-arched Colorado Boulevard Bridge and grand old Hotel Vista Del Arroyo. Even with so many Angelinos given staggered rush hours starting anywhere from 6 to 8:30 am, the backups at the entrance ramps confirm the traffic here is even worse than it is in New York City. Heading south on Santa Anita Avenue past the famous horse track of the same



At the L.A. City Fire Museum, PCS Northeast Chapter Dan McCann admires a collection of scratch-built, 1/32-scale fire truck models created by John Ackerman of Van Nuys, California.

name, it is also apparent that there are many more ARCO and Chevron stations in the City of Angels than there are anywhere back east. Even the smallest, single-story houses in this area have three-car garages as a matter-of-course, and at least seventy percent of the vehicles in the driveways are foreign makes.

Now employing 118 people in four buildings on both sides of Weaver Street in El Monte, Leader Industries was founded by Gary Hunter and his wife Sheryl in 1975. "I'm really supposed to be a school teacher but somehow I fell into this," Gary says, elaborating that he was hired by the RV maker

Mobile Lodge Corp. straight out of Cal State L.A. in 1971. As a subsidiary of HACCOR, the same conglomerate that controls American Emergency Vehicles [AEV] of Jefferson, N.C. and Horton of Grove City, OH, his firm can claim to be one of the country's largest manufacturers of van-based Type II Ford van ambulances. With output averaging units a day, Leader needs just fifteen days to build an ambulance from start-to-finish.

One of our guides to the plant is Parts Sales & Service Manager Doug McEachern, who "wanted to work here since the mid-1970s, but it took me to 2000 to get in. I'd like to say we're the largest ambulance manufacturer in the world but I can't prove it, and if we're not the largest, we're the best." After leading our group through a "secret hole in the wall," the first things he shows us are the work stations where spaghetti-like wiring harnesses are being laid out on giant "bread boards." Even the most-basic Leader harness, McEachern adds, has 141



At the L.A. County Fire Museum, Bill Alexander & Lou Farah pose with a 1963 Seagrave sporting a B&M Siro-Drift in the center of the hood.

wires, and "we number and label every one as to their function." LED strobes are the very latest must-have accessory, since the bulbs don't wear out and they draw just 20 amps for the entire vehicle, versus 60 amps for the halogens they succeed.

Over in the cabinet shop across the street, raw wood is trimmed into shape with a state-of-the-art CNC computer-controlled router with a built-in vacuum system that eliminates dust and holds down the wood without the use of clamps. Since Leader also makes its own dies for the aluminum extrusions in its interiors, McEachern adds proudly "we're not using bathroom moldings and trying to make it work." The pathogen-resistant, gap-free plywood used for the patient compartment floors, meanwhile, costs \$70 a sheet. Another thoughtful detail on Leader ambulances are the four separate batteries placed in a convenient, slide-out tray on the driver's side of the body (Ford's original arrangement is twin

batteries to starboard), allowing the vehicle to jump-start itself. In an open shed beyond the main assembly hall, the installation of the roof cap on a Type II Ford proves an irresistible photo opportunity, especially when "a skilled technician" stands on top of the roof to seat the massive, one-piece composite form while it's being glued into place. "Even with my weight," McEachern stresses, "I can get up on one of our roofs and walk around."

As the bus crosses over the highway-like Los Angeles River corridor (seen in many movie car chases) and heads to the L.A. County Fire Museum in the a largely-industrial area of South Gate, Kevin O'Connell notes that the L.A. County Fire Department has one of the largest jurisdictions in the U.S., serving most of the cities within Los Angeles, the city of San Fernando and incredibly large swaths of unincorporated county land. Accompanied by fully-uniformed 15-year-old son Kevin Having, our host is County of Los Angeles Fire Museum Association President Joe Woyjeck, a captain in Cerritos, CA and a 27-year department veteran who describes himself as the scion of "a family of fire fighters past, present and deceased." While the freshly-restored 1955 Crown (designated "L.A. County 36") he's parked on Otis Street to welcome us gets its fair share of attention, the Museum's main attraction is one of the two Dodge D-200 utility trucks used as "Rescue 51" in the NBC-TV series *Emergency!* Appropriately, the inside doors of the equipment cabinets bear the autographs of all the paramedics who served as technical advisors for the show. Also on exhibit is "Engine 51," a 1965 Crown Firecoach that was actually Engine 60 posted at Universal Studios where the show was filmed; magnetic 51s, quite simply, were applied to the body when the rig was needed for a scene.

Heaping helpings of employee-prepared Carne Asada Chicken - the only thing Kevin is authorized to reveal about the marinade for this famous L.A. delicacy is "the more garlic, the better" - preceded the PCS' next tour, of the L.A. City Fire Department's Supply & Maintenance Division shops located within view of the city's downtown skyscrapers. Most of the trucks within eyeshot are Pierce Arrow XT "triple combination" pumpers employing four-door, all-aluminum cabs and Caterpillar twin-turbo diesel engines, which are awaiting assignment to a station through the application of some L.A. community's

name to the white reflective stripes running across the front doors. With a dozen racks that can lift a "triple" and three more that are long enough for hook-and-ladders, the main building offers enough rack space to handle forty vehicles at a time, but Equipment Specialist Scott Liefeld emphasizes that the facility is not just responsible for vehicle maintenance: "we take care of everything that keeps a fire station active, everything from toilet paper to uniforms."

My group's guide to the Maintenance Division shop is Automotive Supervisor William C. "Jingles" Hevelin II, who jokes "most people here couldn't tell you what my real name is at gunpoint. 'Jingles' goes back to my first night with L.A. City Water & Power 31 years ago. I had cut my beard off, but I still had my Stetson, boots and spurs so they called me that." His area of responsibility is the servicing of light emergency vehicles like brush trucks, ambulances and sedans (nicknamed "Crown Bricks," a surprising number of the old, boxy Ford sedans with 1988-91 styling remain in service in supervisory or reserve capacities), as well as hand-held equipment like Hurst tools and chain saws. He notes that even the "smallest vehicles are getting bigger and more sophisticated. We're crowded on what we have because our ambulances aren't one-ton vans anymore." There are twenty-two people in his section who might handle anything from nine to one hundred vehicles in a week: "In anticipation of brush fire season, we're especially busy from the late spring through early fall. Some of our worst fires," he notes prophetically, "are in mid-October."

Hevelin is especially proud of the facility's "world-class Machine Shop, which keeps the old fleet running, especially when a supplier has gone out of business." The operation's two full-time machinists and one full-time mechanic, he declares, "can do anything but open heart surgery and I would trust them to give it a try. If Michelangelo could weld, he would learn from our guys." Similarly-outstanding standards of craftsmanship are also evident in the Wood Shop, which builds all of the benches used at L.A. fire stations from premium-quality clear oak; the incredibly-tight joins on a beautiful, hand-made tool cart used by the shop's own employees also reward close scrutiny. "You're not ever getting something that nice at IKEA," Hevelin adds. "These guys can replace individual beams and keep a \$3,500 ladder (made from

specialty-grown high-density fir) in service." Though cost is no object when public safety is at stake, he notes "there's pressure not to waste, and pride of ownership."

Since the trip to Wednesday's final tour stop at the L.A. City Fire Museum takes in a stretch of Sunset Boulevard, Kevin O'Connell notes that "Norma Desmond's address does not exist." We do, however, finally get to see the iconic metal letters of the "HOLLYWOOD" sign, which had been threatened by wildfires the week before the Burbank meet took place. The L.A. City Fire Museum, meanwhile, is housed within old Fire Station 27 at the southwest corner of North Cahuenga Boulevard and DeLongpre Avenue in Hollywood. At 20,000 square feet, this registered historic landmark was the largest fire station west of the Mississippi when it was built in 1930, while the current, single-story Station 27 next door is a spiritual replica down to the tiled roof and elegant wood garage doors. So far as PCS people are concerned, the Museum's most-popular attraction is a high-top 1954 Miller Cadillac First Aider ambulance loaned by PCS So-Cal Chapter Charter Member Joe Ortiz; designated Rescue 27, it had actually served out of this location through 1965.

The display cases at the L.A. City Fire Museum deserve almost as much attention as the vehicles, thanks to artifacts that include a 1790 vintage section of wooden water main from Philadelphia and a huge array of 1/32-scale fire truck models that were scratch-built by John Ackerman of Van Nuys, CA. Having constructed his first replica at the age of nine in 1947 - both his grandfather and great-grandfather had been volunteer firemen - Ackerman's later efforts took an average of 150-300 hours each to complete, relying on a miniature lathe and blueprints drawn from numerous measurements and photographs. Some of the materials he employed for his creations included bass wood, shotgun shells and spaghetti, which was used to make tiny ladder rungs; he also found that laces for baby shoes could be turned into realistic-looking hoses.

Thursday, July 12th, 2007: "Funeral Director Day"

During breakfast at the Burbank Holiday Inn Media Center - I know for sure this is L.A. because the honey comes from Knott's Berry Farm and the waiter asks if I would like hot sauce for my eggs - I learn how PCS co-founder Bill Alexander, a retired

electrician who succeeded Dwight Heinmuller as the Society's second president in 1977, got interested in hearses in the first place. "In 1975," he recalled, "I went to look at a Hudson sedan for sale at the Green Funeral Home in Herndon, Virginia. It had been sold the previous day, but a 1927 Henney combination in that eight-bay garage wound up interesting me. I just love engines," so the in-line Continental eight played a big part in his decision to purchase the vehicle (now owned by Marietta, Ohio funeral director Bill Peoples) for \$2,500. Not long afterwards, "George Hamlin wrote an ad to Old Cars Weekly wondering if anyone would be interesting in forming a club. I thought I was the only one in the world with an antique hearse."



This glass-sided Kolls-Royce Silver Cloud hearse garnered much attention from PCS members at the Hollywood Forever Cemetery.

The first of four cemeteries visited on Thursday is the tremendous Rose Hills Memorial Park near Whittier and the City of Industry. Currently covering 1,400 acres with a couple more miles' worth of farmland set aside for future expansion to the east, Kevin O'Connell says it is "maybe the largest cemetery in the world, and certainly the largest in the Western Hemisphere. How many cemeteries are so big that there's a housing development in the middle of it?" On average, its three-story main mortuary handles thirty in-house cases plus another twenty services daily. Owing to the influx of Asian immigrants, quite a few funerals are Buddhist and those rites take place on the top floors so that incense can be burned without disturbing other families.

Despite its size, Rose Hills has very few above-ground monuments, allowing the grass to be maintained with giant riding mowers that resemble combine harvesters. One notable exception is an elegant, 1915 Spanish-style mausoleum that appeared

in Terminator III: Rise of the Machines. "They built an extension onto the front that really looked like it was part of the original structure," O'Connell (who was on fire safety standby during the filming) recalled of a pivotal scene where Arnold Schwarzenegger, brandishing a 30-caliber Browning machine gun, shot his way out of the building carrying a weapons-filled coffin on his shoulder. "What you didn't see on film was the crane with a counterweight that was bearing all but a few ounces of that casket."

Forest Lawn Hollywood Hills is situated north and east of the Cahuenga Pass, in an area used for filming numerous westerns prior to its purchase as a cemetery in 1944. David O. Selznick must have been pleased with how the mortuary building resembled the "Tara" plantation from Gone with the Wind, but Kevin feels that the coyote he spots strolling through the graves is "a not-good sign that they've become a little too-comfortable with humans." After the bus parks next to a faithful replica of Boston's Old North Church that was dedicated in 1965, we learn Lou Farah's connection to the place is a deeply-personal one; his son Louie and daughter Jennifer both had their high school graduations in front of the 200-foot-wide "Birth of Liberty" mosaic at the top of the hill, while his father Joseph Louis Farah (born 1917) was buried here in 1987. "My pa came out here from New Jersey in 1946, and my family all grew up in Toluca Lake," Lou recalled from the foot of his father's grave marker. Gesturing south, he added that "in 1975, we moved to a new home in Lake Hollywood Estates, above the Hollywood Reservoir destroyed in the movie Earthquake. When my father died, we requested that he be buried just down the hill from my mother's house, with his feet at the headstone so he could keep an eye on her."

After a lunch break that includes a preview of Saturday's show field at Johnny Carson Park - why is playing golf prohibited when the place is situated on Bob Hope Way? - the meet attendees head to Forest Lawn's century-old original location in Glendale. The town was still called Tropicco when the cemetery was founded in 1906, but the aesthetic vision that would make it world-famous did not take root until Dr. Hubert Lewright Eaton (1881-1966) arrived in 1912. It turns out that this Liberty, Missouri native, who had also punched cattle and assayed copper in Montana, took the job as Forest Lawn's sales manager to compensate creditors from a failed silver

manager to compensate creditors from a failed silver mining venture in Nevada. His success selling plots on a then-novel "before need" basis saw him quickly promoted to General Manager, after which his epiphany for "A Great Park Devoid of Misshapen Monuments" reputedly took place during a contemplative stroll of the grounds on New Year's Day, 1917. In the long run, his life-affirming, beautifully-arranged landscapes would inspire adults and children alike to visit even when they had no funeral to attend; incredibly, a billboard passed by the bus notes more than 60,000 people have been married in Forest Lawn's churches.

Placed on a hilltop offering a dramatic view of downtown L.A. to the south plus another panorama of the San Gabriel Mountains to the north - our host hotel in Burbank can also be seen from one of the terraces - Forest Lawn's Museum features a 1948 replica of Lorenzo Ghiberti's Paradise Doors from the Baptistery of St. John in Florence, Italy (Michelangelo gave the original its nickname when he deemed it "Worthy to be the gates of Paradise"); perfectly-detailed copies of the British Crown Jewels; and an Easter Island "Moai" that was named "Henry" in honor of Henry Wendt, who found the ancient statue being used as ballast on a fishing boat. The main attraction on this mount, however, is the adjacent Hall of the Crucifixion-Resurrection, a giant, semi-circular theater dedicated on Good Friday, 1951 to display Polish artist Jan Styka's 185-foot-long, 45-foot-tall painting of Jesus Christ stoically anticipating his trial on Calvary. Following a 25-year search across two continents, Dr. Eaton re-discovered the massive 1895 canvas in 1943 (rolled around a phone pole at the Chicago Civic Opera Company) and commissioned the artist's son Adam Styka to supervise the restoration.

Thursday's final tour is the Hollywood Forever Cemetery at 6000 Santa Monica Boulevard behind Paramount Studios, whose water tower looms over the main mausoleum. Compared to the coordinated, reflective dignity of Forest Lawn's facilities, the funerary art at Hollywood Forever is much more eclectic and exhibitionist. Some of the newest, flashiest memorials apparently belong to Russian or Armenian gangsters, judging from the Cyrillic lettering, the relative youth of the typical deceased and computer-etched portraits that are so insanely-detailed that chest hair can be discerned above the open-collared shirts. Other graves are marked with

live cactus, an Orthodox crucifix made of white-painted plumbing pipe and, for reasons that can only be guessed at, two votive candles accompanied by Andre Pink Champagne and a plastic spray bottle of Fabulous All-Purpose De-Greaser.

Though a 1955-62 vintage Rolls Royce Silver Cloud hearse gets the lion's share of attention from PCS members - the big, long rubber seals surrounding the casket compartment windows are impressive in themselves - the main tourist draw at Hollywood Forever is a large and diverse roster of celebrity residents that includes Peter Lorre, Edward G. Robinson, Douglas Fairbanks Sr. and Jr., star-struck gangster Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, movie director Cecil B. De Mille and "MAN OF 1,000 VOICES" Mel Blanc, whose headstone bears Porky Pig's signature signoff "That's All, Folks." Tyrone Power's grave, overlooking a pond and Greek temple that's appeared in several films, is a bench-style marker with Bible-inspired bookends and a passage from "Hamlet" on the top slab, while the final resting place of Rodolfo Guglielmi Valentino (1895-1926) is found in space 1205 of the main mausoleum. Anna Maria De Carrascosa (1910-1973), thought to be "The Lady in Black" who always left a dozen roses for the silent movie idol on his birthdays, is buried about 200 yards away in proximity to Jayne Mansfield's cremated remains.

Friday, July 13th, 2007: "The Day Off"



A dramatic view of the Angeles National Forest from the crest of California Highway 2. The cities of Palmdale and Lancaster are somewhere beyond these mountains.

Having filled a half-dozen notebooks and two gigabytes' worth of digital camera memory since Monday, Your Editor and his wife Lisa Lachover-Merksamer took full advantage of the Thomas Guide graciously provided by Kevin O'Connell (FAR more

detailed than the maps from Avis) and took a silver Mustang convertible into the San Gabriel Mountains for a desperately-needed back road break. Almost

